

Nationwide Taser® Study Finds Serious Injuries Rare after Taser Use

1/15/2009

WINSTON-SALEM, N.C. – An emergency medicine researcher at Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center has just published the first large, independent study of injuries from "conducted electrical weapon" (CEW) or Taser® use, finding that serious injuries occurred in fewer than 1 percent of 1,201 Taser uses by law enforcement officers.

The study, led by William P. Bozeman, M.D., of Wake Forest University School of Medicine, is now available online in the Annals of Emergency Medicine ("Safety and Injury Profile of Conducted Electrical Weapons Used By Law Enforcement Officers Against Criminal Suspects") and is scheduled to appear in a future print issue of the journal.

The findings represent a three-year review of 1,201 CEW uses at six law enforcement agencies across the United States. The study was funded by the National Institute of Justice.

"These weapons appear to be very safe, especially when compared to other options police have for subduing violent or combative suspects," Bozeman said. "That is not to say that injuries and deaths are impossible. Police and medical personnel need to be aware of the potential for serious injury and look for evidence that a person subdued by a Taser has been hurt."

The study reports that 99.75 percent of criminal suspects shocked by a CEW received no injuries or mild injuries only, such as scrapes and bruises. Of the 1,201 criminal suspects, 492 suffered mild injuries, mostly (83 percent) superficial puncture wounds from the Taser probes. Of the three subjects who sustained significant injuries, two suffered from head injuries related to falls; the third developed rhabdomyolysis, or a rapid breakdown of muscle tissue. Ninety-four percent of the suspects were male, and alcohol or intoxication was documented in almost half of the cases (49.5 percent).

A physician at each participating agency reviewed police and medical records after each CEW use. Injuries were identified and classified as mild, moderate or severe.

More than two-thirds of United States law enforcement agencies currently use CEWs. They are credited with decreasing police officer and suspect injuries and deaths due to police use of force. However, the devices have been surrounded with controversy.

"While injuries from Taser use are uncommon, they are not unheard of," Bozeman said. "Subjects exposed to a CEW discharge should be assessed for injuries, and appropriate medical evaluation should be provided when non-trivial injuries are apparent or suspected. Existing medical and/or psychiatric conditions in the suspect may also cause or contribute to the behavior that leads police to use a Taser or other physical force. These underlying conditions may require medical assessment and treatment, independent of Taser exposure."

Co-authors were J. Tripp Winslow, M.D., M.P.H., of Wake Forest University, William E. Hauda, M.D., of Inova Fairfax Hospital (Va.), Joseph J. Heck, D.O., of University Medical Center (Nev.), Derrel Graham, M.D., and Brian Martin, M.D., M.S., of Louisiana State University-Shreveport (La.).

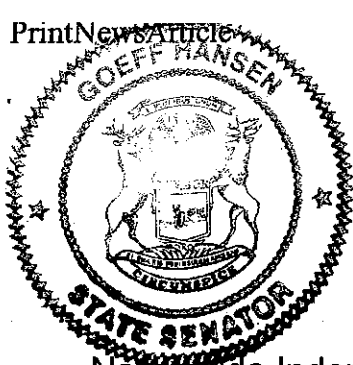
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Annals of Emergency Medicine is the peer-reviewed scientific journal for the American College of Emergency Physicians, a national medical society with more than 27,000 members. ACEP is committed to advancing emergency care through continuing education, research, and public education. Headquartered in Dallas, Texas, ACEP has 53 chapters representing each state, as well as Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia. A Government Services Chapter represents emergency physicians employed by military branches and other government agencies. For more information visit www.acep.org.

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Wake Forest University Baptist
MEDICAL CENTER

For Immediate Release 10/08/2007



Nationwide Independent Taser® Study Results Suggest Devices are Safe

Nationwide Independent Taser® Study Results Suggest Devices are Safe

WINSTON-SALEM, N.C. – A nationwide study examining the safety of Tasers® used by law enforcement agencies suggests the devices are safe, causing a low occurrence of serious injuries.

“This study is the first large, independent study of injuries associated with Tasers. It is the first injury epidemiology study to review every Taser deployment and to reliably assess the overall risk and severity of injuries in real world conditions,” said William Bozeman, M.D., the lead investigator and an emergency medicine specialist at Wake Forest University School of Medicine. “The injury rate is low and most injuries appear to be minor. These results support the safety of the devices.”

Bozeman will present the study results at the American College of Emergency Physicians’ Research Forum in Seattle, Wash., Oct. 8. In a review of nearly 1,000 cases, 99.7 per cent of those subjected to a Taser had mild injuries, such as scrapes and bruises, or none at all. Only three subjects (0.3%) suffered injuries severe enough to need hospital admission. Two had head injuries suffered in falls after Taser use. A third subject was admitted to a hospital two days after arrest with a medical condition of unclear relationship to the Taser. Two subjects died, but autopsy reports indicate that neither death was related to the Taser. Earlier partial results involving 597 cases were published in the September issue of *Annals of Emergency Medicine*.

The independent prospective study was funded by the National Institute of Justice and included six law enforcement agencies across the United States. A tactical physician at each participating agency reviewed police and medical records after each successful application of a Taser. Injuries were identified and classified as mild, moderate, or severe and their relationship to the Taser was classified as direct, indirect, or uncertain.

Tasers are used by many police departments in the United States and are credited with decreasing police officer and suspect injuries and deaths due to police use of force. However, the devices have been surrounded with controversy.

“This is the largest independent study to date, and the first to detail the medical effects of Tasers under real-world conditions,” said Bozeman. “With physician review of 100 percent of Taser uses, this study promises to give us the best information yet on the medical risks of these weapons.”

Bozeman said results from previous studies were limited by the use of animal models and of healthy police volunteers in training settings, not criminal suspects in real-world conditions.

“The Taser is a weapon and it can clearly cause injuries and even deaths in some cases,” Bozeman said. “The question is ‘how likely is it to cause a significant injury’ and whether that risk of injury outweighs the benefits it brings.”

Co-researchers were J. Tripp Winslow, M.D., M.P.H.; Derrel Graham, M.D.; Brian Martin, M.D.; Joseph J. Heck, D.O.; all of the Department of Emergency Medicine at Wake Forest University; Louisiana State University, Inova Fairfax Hospital (Va.), and University Medical Center (Nev.).

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Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center is an academic health system comprised of North Carolina Baptist

THE OAKLAND PRESS

Allowing licensed civilians to use Tasers makes sense

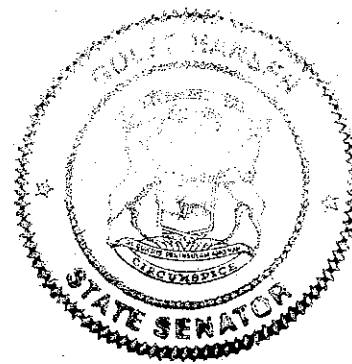


There's new legislation in Lansing that would give people another self-defense option - one that should work without seriously injuring an assailant.

House Bills 5754, 5755 and 5756 would legalize the possession of Tasers in Michigan by residents who already have concealed pistol licenses.

The key to this law is the part concerning CPLs.

Only people who have already taken special training and can currently carry a pistol in Michigan would be allowed to buy a Taser.



A Taser is a stun gun that uses an electrical charge to stop an attacker. It leaves the assailant in a passive and confused condition for several minutes, allowing the victim to escape.

The Taser that would be sold to residents is NOT the same as the police version. It is a one-use device that must be reprogrammed by the company for additional use. In other words, it is meant purely for self-defense. Presumably, the victim would stun the attacker, drop the weapon and run to safety. Tasers, which are legal in 43 other states, would come under all the same laws as handguns in Michigan. They could NOT be purchased over the Internet.

The buyer would have to have a CPL that already requires special training and would have additional training supplied by the manufacturer. Consequently, it should not require any additional police time. One of the main proponents of the bills and a chief sponsor is state Rep. Rick Jones, R-Grand Ledge, a retired Eaton County sheriff with 33 years of experience in law enforcement.

"I would think that if this was put up, it would pass easily," said Jones. "I have a strong belief that you have a right to defend yourself if you are threatened. All we're proposing is the people who already have CPLs would be allowed to have an option to have a Taser. If they are in defense of their life, they can use a bullet. Why not let them use a Taser?"



May 13, 2008

Self-defense: Bills to allow citizen use of TASERs make sense

A Lansing State Journal editorial

Stun guns - you may know them by the brand-name TASERs - are designed to be non-lethal self-defense devices. Yet in Michigan, the general public is barred by law from using this defense.

But state law does allow citizens to carry lethal firearms, if they take the proper courses.

That makes no sense, which is why legislation backed by mid-Michigan Reps. Rick Jones, R-Grand Ledge, Paul Opsommer, R-DeWitt, and Richard Ball, R-Bennington Township, should be law, too.

House Bills 5754-56 would bring the legal possession of stun guns - "a device capable of electro-muscular disruption," in the legislative parlance - in line with the rules for handguns.

The bills were filed back in February and the Detroit News reports there is opposition to this idea from elements of the law-enforcement community. That doesn't make much sense.

Less than a decade ago, Michigan had tight rules on who could legally carry a concealed weapon. County boards stocked with law enforcement officials had wide discretion to deny so-called "CCW" permits.

Then, the Legislature adopted a new standard of "shall issue" permits.

Citizens could carry lethal firearms if they met clearly defined standards. Critics, including this newspaper, warned that the switch would lead to a loss of public safety.

The experience has not borne out those fears. While the number of CCW permits increased by the tens of thousands, there was not a comparable surge in gunplay.

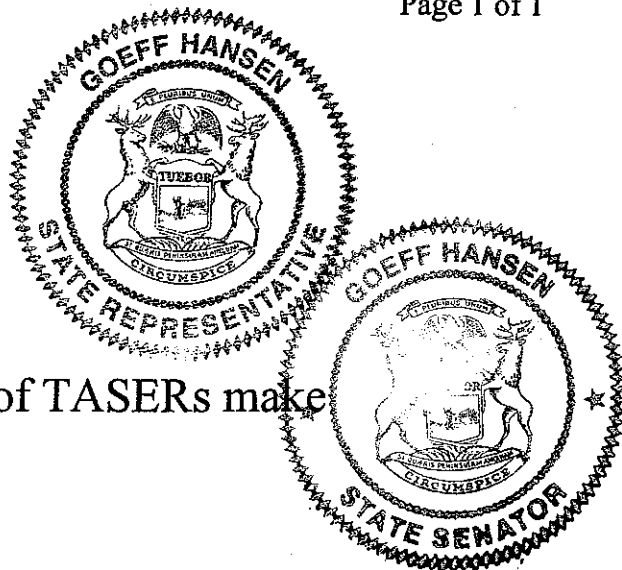
If Michigan can allow for the concealed carrying of lethal firearms, it can make room for the use of non-lethal stun guns.

The bills before the Legislature would not put a TASER in just anyone's hands.

Those wishing to carry them would have to register and receive the same type of training required for carrying concealed firearms.

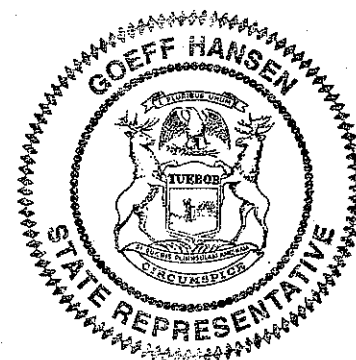
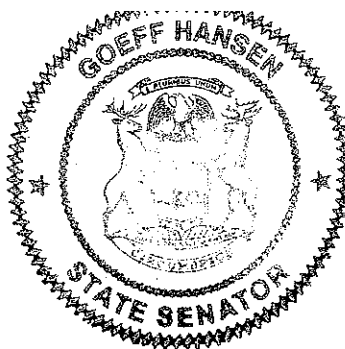
The state of Michigan should encourage citizens to use methods of self-defense that are not lethal. Reserving stun guns for officialdom while banning them for citizens runs counter to that goal.

Lawmakers should get HBs 5754-56 moving.





THE GRAND RAPIDS
PRESS



Shocks, not shots

Friday, February 29, 2008

Legislation that would allow those with concealed weapons permits to possess Tasers has merit. These citizens have been vetted already to carry guns. Lawmakers should see there are benefits to steering people toward a less lethal form of protection. Most states allow civilians in general to possess Tasers. A thorough review and debate is in order.

Michigan along with Hawaii, Rhode Island, Maryland, New Jersey, New York and Wisconsin ban Tasers from civilian use. Tasers or stun guns can deliver 50,000 volts of electric shock, tensing up a person's muscles and incapacitating them. A person can be dropped at a distance of 15 feet. Michigan police officers, law enforcement and some private security can carry the weapons. Members of law enforcement have relied on Tasers as a safer alternative to subdue suspects resisting arrest.

Bill sponsors say they are offering another safety option that provides more confidence than Mace but not the lethal conclusion of a gun. Forty-three states see value in that.

Reps. Arian Meekhof, R-Olive Township, Rick Jones, R-Grand Ledge and Goeff Hansen, R-Hart, introduced the three-bill package. Under the legislation, residents who have gone through the process to get a Carry Concealed Weapons permit could possess a Taser. The seller of the weapon would have to provide training on the use, effects and risks of the device. Tasers would be prohibited in the same public places as identified in the CCW legislation, including schools, hospitals, sports arenas/stadiums and taverns.

If convicted of the misdemeanor of using the device on a person for other than protection of person or property, a person would face as much as a \$2,000 fine, up to two years in prison or both. Violating rules for possessing or selling Tasers would be a felony that carries up to a four-year sentence, \$2,000 fine or both.

The bills were referred to the House Judiciary Committee where hearings should be held. The public and law enforcement need the opportunity to weigh in, and information about civilian use in other states has to be explored. CCW permit holders already go through gun training and receive background checks. They would seem the ideal candidates. The Taser training is a good safety precaution.

There is no comprehensive study on civilian use. Most of the high profile cases involve allegations of misuse by police. Results of a Taser study funded by the National Institute of Justice that reviewed 962 cases from six law enforcement agencies was released in October. Dr. William Bozeman, the emergency medical specialist at Wake Forest University School of Medicine reported that nearly all the cases they found resulted in no injuries or minor ones. Two people did die, but neither was related to Taser use. Last July, Amnesty International reported 250 cases in six years in which people died after being stunned, but individual causes of death weren't tracked.

Fear of misuse or Tasers falling in the hands of criminals should not lead to this being dismissed out of hand. Yes, Tasers are weapons. But a jolt – even a 50,000 volt one – is far less lethal than a bullet. That distinction is why this measure deserves serious discussion.

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10/8/07 - Nationwide Independent Taser® Study Results Suggest Devices are Safe

WINSTON-SALEM, N.C. – A nationwide study examining the safety of Tasers® used by law enforcement agencies suggests the devices are safe, causing a low occurrence of serious injuries.

“This study is the first large, independent study of injuries associated with Tasers. It is the first injury epidemiology study to review every Taser deployment and to reliably assess the overall risk and severity of injuries in real world conditions,” said William Bozeman, M.D., the lead investigator and an emergency medicine specialist at Wake Forest University School of Medicine. “The injury rate is low and most injuries appear to be minor. These results support the safety of the devices.”

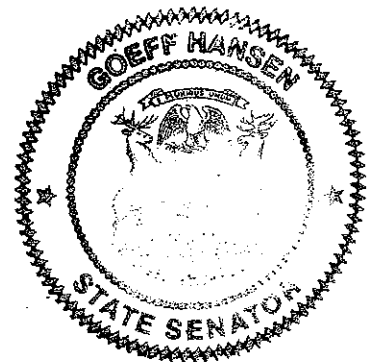
In what was called the first large independent study of injuries from Tasers, researchers reviewed 962 cases in six locations. Nearly all the cases they found resulted in no injuries or minor ones such as scrapes and bruises. In the cases reviewed for the study, two people died, but autopsies found neither death was related to use of a Taser. Three people were hospitalized after being zapped, two with injuries from falls. It was unclear whether a third hospitalization was related to the use of a stun gun, according to the researchers.

The independent prospective study was funded by the National Institute of Justice and included six law enforcement agencies across the United States.

Bozeman said results from previous studies were limited by the use of animal models and of healthy police volunteers in training settings, not criminal suspects in real-world conditions.

“The Taser is a weapon and it can clearly cause injuries and even deaths in some cases,” Bozeman said. “The question is ‘how likely is it to cause a significant injury’ and whether that risk of injury outweighs the benefits it brings.”

By July 2007, Amnesty International USA had tallied 250 cases in six years in which people died after being stunned with Tasers, but the group didn't track the individual causes of death. According to the manufacturer, Taser International Inc., the devices have been listed as a contributing factor in about 12 deaths.





Chicago Man Hit by Taser After Bar Fight Dies

Friday, April 25, 2008

Associated Press

OXFORD, Ohio —

A Chicago man died Thursday, five days after police subdued him with a Taser outside a bar near Miami University, a hospital spokesman said.

Kevin Piskura, 24, died shortly after 5 p.m. at University Hospital in Cincinnati, said spokesman Don Crouse.

Oxford officer Geoff Robinson used the device early Saturday morning as he tried to break up a fight, police said. The Butler County offices of the sheriff and prosecutor are investigating the officer's actions.

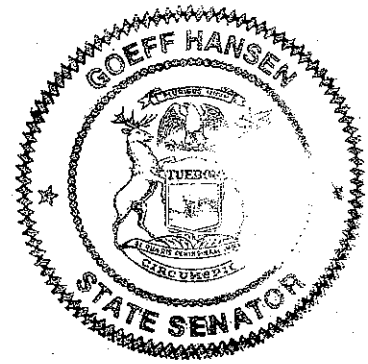
"We still request that people refrain from rash judgment and wait until the independent investigation of this event is complete, lest tragedy lead to more tragedy," the Piskura family said in a statement released by the hospital.

Piskura, a 2006 Miami graduate, argued with police after a friend was escorted from a bar, police said. The officer drew his Taser stun gun and told Piskura to stop, and when he did not, the officer used the device and hit Piskura in the chest.

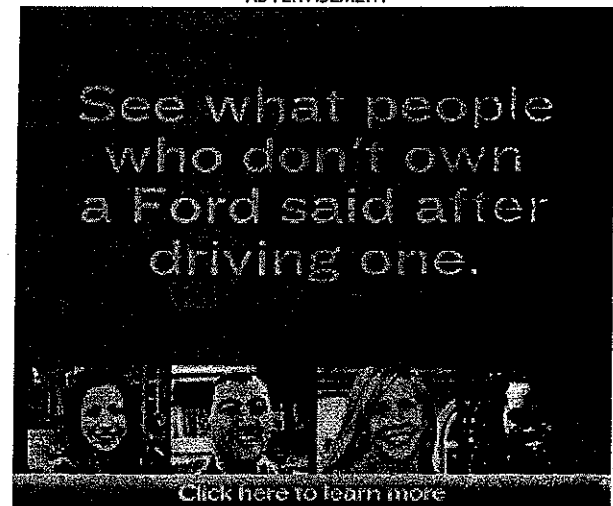
Video from a camera attached to the Taser shows Piskura getting shocked for about 10 seconds as he rolls around on a sidewalk.

Robinson, 27, has been placed on paid leave pending the outcome of the investigation, Oxford police spokesman Jim Squance said.

Robinson has been an Oxford police officer for two years. He had taken a refresher course on using a stun gun a week before the incident, police said.



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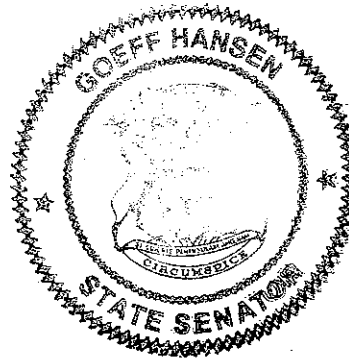
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Tuesday, April 8, 2008

Sale of Tasers to public weighed

Mich. bills would allow people with concealed weapons permits to carry nonlethal device.

Delores Flynn / The Detroit News

GRAND LEDGE -- Cana Garrison has handled guns since age 12, when she and her dad shot targets in the woods behind their Charlotte home.

But the Air National Guardswoman, who has rifle and pistol training, would rather carry a Taser than a gun.

"With a Taser, I can still defend myself, but with less force to incapacitate a perpetrator, and at the same time I don't have to worry about hurting anyone else," she said.

Garrison is among those who support a three-bill House package that would allow Michigan residents with concealed-weapon permits to carry a Taser, instead of a gun, as a less-than-lethal option for self-defense.

Under current law, only law enforcement and Corrections officers, military personnel, licensed private investigators, pilots and crew members can possess weapons that use electric currents.

"I believe firearms are a good thing, but I'm concerned about potential stray bullets harming someone, especially in my home," said Garrison, 28, who's taken state concealed pistol license training and is seeking a CCW permit.

"If I shot someone and the bullet went through them, then through a wall or window and hit an innocent bystander on the sidewalk, that's the absolute last thing I'd want to happen trying to defend yourself."

The law would allow Michigan residents to buy single-shot civilian Tasers that use compressed nitrogen to shoot wired darts 15 feet, delivering a painful electrical charge that incapacitates a person's muscles and limbs.

And while proponents argue that Tasers are a safer alternative to firearms, law enforcement officials and human rights advocates say the devices are far too dangerous to entrust to the

A Taser in every pocket? Proposed law would allow more in state to carry the weapons

By Jay M. Grossman
ECCENTRIC STAFF WRITER

Dana Shafman never leaves the house without her Taser.

"I call it my seat belt for life," she says. "When I get into my car, I never think, 'Today is the day I'm going to get into an accident,' but I still put on my seat belt.

"It's the same thing with my Taser. I never think, 'Today is the day I'm going to get raped,' but I take my Taser everywhere in case someone ever tries to attack me."

The Arizona native formed a company called Shieldher, a licensed business that allows her to sell the electronic stun guns from her home in Scottsdale. Instead of a Tupperware party, Shafman organizes Taser parties, where groups of ladies gather to talk about basic self-defense.

They also get a chance to test their target skills by shooting a Taser at cardboard cutouts.

"I'm a single woman," said Shafman, 35. "Just knowing I have this device instantly increased my quality of life."

By next year, she could begin shipping orders to Michigan. New legislation being considered by state lawmakers would make it legal for residents to carry a Taser if they're already licensed to carry a concealed weapon.

State Reps. Chuck Moss, R-Birmingham, and David Law, R-Commerce, are two of the co-sponsors supporting House Bills 5754, 5755 and 5756. Both men believe the proposals offer a nonlethal alternative to carrying a handgun.

"We license people to shoot guns. Why not let them use a self-defense weapon that has less than deadly force?" Moss said. "I think it's logical. If a citizen is armed - and you have that right - even if you have a mistake, you haven't killed anyone. I think it's a major plus."

Law is a former assistant prosecutor in Oakland County and member of the House Judiciary Committee scheduled to review the proposed legislation. He echoed a similar line of reasoning for his support.

"Bottom line, it's geared toward people with concealed pistol licenses," he said. "If somebody's OK to carry a gun, why not a Taser? As technology evolves, this is one of the benefits."

JUST WALK AWAY

Tasers are already legal in 43 states. While they would fall under the same restrictions as handgun laws, Birmingham Police Chief Richard Patterson believes the potential still exists for abuse.

"I'm not talking about someone approaching you with a knife in their hand," he said. "I'm talking about a traffic situation that escalates and the next thing you know, someone is Tased ... that's not correct."

Obtaining a license to carry a concealed handgun is relatively easy in the state of Michigan, Patterson said. In most situations, he believes a person can avoid the threat of trouble by simply walking away.

"Police officers are called to scenes where they'll confront a hostile person with a dangerous weapon," he said. "The officer can't just walk away from that scene ... but anyone else can just turn around."

While Moss understands that argument, he believes enough safeguards are in place to discourage vigilantes.

"To use a Taser wrongfully would be a felony," he said. "It's assault and you will be subject to prosecution. You can't just 'tase' someone and say 'oops.' You better understand the circumstances under which you can brandish a weapon."

State Rep. Rick Jones, R-Grand Ledge, introduced the Taser bills. A retired Eaton County sheriff, he also believes anyone owning a Taser would use it responsibly.

"The model being sold to the public is a one-shot device - and they wouldn't be available at the local Wal-Mart for anyone to buy one," Jones said. "It's made for somebody who's being attacked to discharge, drop it and run for safety."

The legislation already has bipartisan support in Lansing. Jones expects the judicial hearings to begin sometime in the summer.

In the meantime, Shafman said she already receives numerous inquiries from Michigan residents who want to purchase a Taser. The model she offers sells for about \$350 with a laser sighting, shoots up to 15 feet and delivers 50,000 volts for a continuous 30 seconds.

"To me," she said, "that's a small price to pay for your life."

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